

Victims of Illicit Drugs

A California Non-Profit Corporation

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November 28, 2021

Honorable Anna G. Eshoo, Chairwoman
Members, Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairwoman Eshoo,

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to share our thoughts as Congress continues to debate proposed law relating to fentanyl related substances and their addition to Schedule 1 of the Controlled Substances Act.

V.O.I.D. is a California non-profit corporation, formed by bereaved parents, united through tragedy, with the common goal of spreading awareness and education to the public of this menace we know as "illicit fentanyl." Knowledge is power, and in this situation widespread public knowledge will help immensely in saving lives.

The CDC recently reported that over 100,000 illicit drug deaths occurred in our country between April 2020 and April 2021. Of those deaths, it was reported that approximately two thirds, (64%), are attributed to synthetic opioids, primarily "illicit fentanyl." An astonishing number, credited to a single illicitly manufactured synthetic drug. The substance, produced primarily outside of our borders, is distributed internationally, and prominently within our borders. This scourge continues, seemingly unabated as illustrated by the continued escalation of deaths that have occurred annually since 2015.

Scheduling of "illicit fentanyl" under the Controlled Substances Act has been debated by Congress for several sessions. Law Enforcement has their position. Harm Reduction organizations have theirs. Now I would like to share what we would believe to be the shared position of the thousands of families that have lost loved ones through ingestion of this illicit synthetic narcotic.

Most will agree law enforcement's goal is to enforce criminal laws, maintain the peace, and when necessary, incarcerate offenders. On the other side, Harm Reduction advocates at its extreme, the legalization and free use of illicit drugs. Further argument is provided by them associated with social justice issues, and harms of the past that led to what is described as mass incarceration.

These issues have been brought to the forefront, and there is little valid argument that they are not being addressed. Not solved. But being aggressively addressed.

We can listen to the posture of both groups and see a common denominator. Both refer to these in a variety of terminology. "Illicit fentanyl" as a controlled substance? It is not. The narrative needs to change to introduce a term, not commonly used, but gaining prominence when the way it receives this designation is explained. We are talking exclusively of "illicit fentanyl", and the need for any reference to it as a "controlled substance," be changed to a "poison." When you look at "illicit fentanyl's" manufacture and distribution, there is nothing "controlled" about it.

"Poison" - A substance that can cause illness or death when introduced or absorbed.

Certainly, any controlled substance or illicit drug taken in lethal amounts, can result in death. But "illicit fentanyl" is unquestionably deserving of this designation. What needs to be understood is "illicit fentanyl" changes everything. The tiny amounts needed to kill most victims, is 3-5 milligrams. In comparison, a lethal dose of Cocaine has been determined to be 1200 milligrams. Methamphetamines lethal dose has been determined to be 200 mg. But for "illicit fentanyl," our children, who were killed after unknowingly ingesting it, would still be here. We all know the numbers. "Illicit fentanyl" is 50-100 times stronger than morphine, and most are being deceived by illegal distributors manufacturing this poison in clandestine labs, into ingesting it.

We know fentanyl is being added to many street/recreational drugs, such as Cocaine, Methamphetamine, Heroin, and MDMA. But for fentanyl, most users of these substances may become/remains addicted, but they would be alive! Add to this narrative, the production of counterfeit pills, made exclusively to mimic prescription pharmaceuticals such as Oxycontin/oxycodone, Percocet, Adderall, and Xanax, to name a few of the most popular. Again, users are being deceived by dealers, and sold what they believe to be a prescription medication that is in fact nothing but a pill containing a neutral binder and an unknown quantity of fentanyl. In being deceived, they are being poisoned. In being poisoned, they are being murdered.

The need to identify "illicit fentanyl" and its related analogs as a Schedule 1 substance, is far past due. "Illicit fentanyl" has no legitimate medical use. Its illegal production and distribution are simply for the purpose of monetary gain, and the creation of a continuing customer base through addiction.

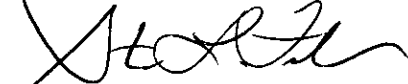
The matter of penalty should be equally administered for possession of the determined quantities. A law without consequences is not a law. Society expects and demands consequences. The consequence of our loved ones unknowingly consuming a substance, containing "illicit fentanyl", was death.

Emphasis further needs to be applied to the appropriate terminology pertaining to "illicit fentanyl." Again, "illicit fentanyl" is a synthetic "poison", with no identifiable medical purpose.

This is a complex issue, with a variety of components such as education, awareness and treatment, needing to be addressed further. Placing "illicit fentanyl" in its appropriate Schedule 1 category of the Controlled Substances Act, is a meaningful and necessary first step in the right direction.

Again, on behalf of the thousands of families throughout the nation, who have, and continue to deal with the loss of their loved ones through this poison, our sincerest thanks for your efforts. We stand available individually and as an organization, to assist in any way possible.

With Sincerest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven L. Filson", written in a cursive style.

Steven L. Filson, Secretary